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THE GOOD PAGAN'S ACHIEVEMENT

THE RELIGIOUS WRITING OF W. B. YEATS

By M. C. Bradbrook

In his *Autobiographies* Yeats describes himself as " a very religious man " who hated the destroyers of " the simpler religion of my childhood "—the Victorian rationalists of his father's generation, Huxley and Tindall. Like Shelley, Yeats cast looks of undisguised regret towards the Christianity he felt he had lost.

" Must we part, Von Hügel, though much alike, for we
Accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity ? . . .
. . . I, though heart might find relief
Did I become a Christian man, and choose for my belief
What seems most welcome in the tomb—play a predestined part.
Homer is my example, and his unchristened heart.
The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture said ?
So get you gone, Von Hügel, though with blessings on your head." [1]

And in the poem preceding this, to the Soul's command:

" Look on that fire, salvation walks therein ",

the Heart retorts:

" What theme had Homer but original sin ? "

Homer stands for all lovers of such heroic beauty as Yeats saw in his Phœnix " a woman Homer sung ",[2] a beauty which he knew only too bitterly to be mortal and transient, but which he laboured to transmute into the permanence of art. In an attempt to preserve and enshrine the visions of his youth, Yeats evolved a whole system of heroic symbols—Byzantium, the land of the artist where golden images shine " in glory of changeless metal "—for it was so passionately his desire as to become ultimately his conviction that such beauty had not only in art but in life an eternal being.[3] Yet in *Last Poems* the sculptured

[1] *Vacillation*, VIII.

[2] Maud Gonne, the political agitator. See the poem of this name; also *Peace*, *No Second Troy* and *Fallen Majesty*.

[3] *Broken Dreams*, *Quarrel in Old Age*; cf. *Tom the Lunatic* and *Old Tom Again*.

head of his Phœnix in old age depicts the terrifying and inhuman petrifaction of her image in the heart and in the world of appearance:

> " . . . this bronze head
> Human, superhuman, a bird's round eye,
> Everything else withered and mummy-dead." [1]

He contrasts this with what he has known, the full moon of beauty:

> " . . . her form all full
> As if with magnanimity of light . . ."

In the most direct of his poetic confessions, *The Circus Animals' Desertion*, he looks back upon all his dramatic writing as a reflection of his own private conflicts, a means of ordering his inner life.

> " . . . Character isolated by a deed
> To engross the present and dominate memory.
> Players and painted stage took all my love,
> And not those things that they were emblems of."

Now " a broken man " he is deserted by the circus of obedient figures and

> " . . . must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."

It has been much disputed in what sense Yeats believed in his own more fantastic theories of reincarnation and the thirty phases of the moon, or in his wife's psychic messages. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in some words of Keats:—

" I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same view of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. . . . The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth." [2]

Yeats saw all superlatives, including the religious superlatives, as the issue of man's need:

> " In pity for man's darkening thought
> He walked that room and issued thence
> In Galilean turbulence . . .
> Whatever flames upon the night
> Man's own resinous heart has fed." [3]

He himself used the myths of Ireland and of ancient Greece, and finally the Gospel story as the basis for his plays, attempting always to present " character isolated by a deed ", the single act of heroic self-revelation, which defines and reveals the meaning of a whole life, which is final because it is superlatively great. It is only in " the sublime ", that is the superlative embodiment, that beauty becomes

[1] *A Bronze Head.*

[2] Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22nd November, 1817.

[3] *Two Songs from a Play*, i.e. *Calvary*, also published in *The Tower*. Cf. the poem *Death* in the same volume, " Man has created Death ".

" self-begotten ", the idea of such beauty constituting in itself its own truest guarantee.[1]

So the world of Yeat's drama is a world of high and unfaltering passion, of what Eliot called the " high dream ". The stylized verse, the dancers' movements and the gilded masks are the instruments of its faith, the symbolic blazon of a purely personal affirmation. In a satiric little poem on the Byzantine Church, Yeats mocks his own heroics under the guise of an Apollonian Virgin and Child, royally clad, without trace of the Carpenter's Family:

> " The true faith discovered was
> When painted panel, statuary,
> Glass mosaic, window glass
> Amended what was told awry
> By some peasant gospeller." [2]

Conversely, in another poem based on painting, the Virgin feels the terror of being caught in " a love that makes my heart's blood stop " and losing the little familiar round of secular happiness.[3] Yet again, reverting to the other view, the Magi of a second coming seek to disjoin what the Incarnation united and to regain a Byzantine immobility:

> " . . . being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
> The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor." [4]

Christianity, since it is not dependent on the personal assent of believers, can indulge in the " turbulence " of the historic particulars, the scandal of the Gospel story. Private creeds, founded upon sceptical disillusion coupled with deep and passionate spiritual need, must instead protect themselves with irony from a charge of heroic rhodomontade, vacillating between the exalted and the embittered moods, now flowering like the abundance of the chestnut and now blazing with the flames of superhuman " life-in-death ".[5]

In Yeats's plays the great theme is, in Charles Williams' phrase, the affirmation of images. It is an instinctive and incomplete affirmation, for Yeats's spiritual knowledge was incomplete: but his state of vacillation or tension was perhaps not so far removed from certain stages of orthodox experience as he imagined it to be. He learnt much from the poets his masters, especially Blake, Spenser and Dante, though what came naturally to them as inheritance, his daedal trade bestowed on Yeats as the last reward of a life devoted to art. The hierophant whose creeds are of less account than his ceremonies cannot expect an audience of any magnitude, and in the end Yeats came to think that a hundred persons were as many as he could hope to interest in

[1] This, if I am not mistaken, is not far from the modern version of the ontological argument.

[2] *Wisdom.* Yeats continually uses pictures to symbolize his " Moods " and finally in *The Municipal Gallery Revisited* it seems that the pictures of dead friends evoke more than the living.

[3] *The Mother of God.*

[4] *The Magi.*

[5] For the image of the double flowering and flaming tree see *Vacillation* II and compare *Among School Children,* last verse.

his plays. He was conscious too of the personal price which an artist must pay for his achievement.[1]

Yeats first projects his own inner story in *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), a legend of the holy maid who sold her soul to prevent the peasants in time of famine selling theirs, but who was saved in spite of the bargain, since:

> " The Light of Lights
> Looks only on the motive, not the deed.
> The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone."

The Catholic hierarchy objected to this play (according to Yeats), but in fact it employs religious terms in innocent reduction of their full significance, for the intensifying of the human love stories—the poet Aleel's love for Cathleen and Cathleen's love for the people. Devotional symbols are exploited aesthetically, for the feeling they convey and not for their significance, as when Cathleen cries out before she goes to strike her bargain:

> " Mary, Queen of Angels,
> And all you clouds on clouds of saints, farewell! "

The sanctity of Cathleen is attested by the worship of Aleel; her Christian nimbus is reflected from her lover's eyes. The play exalts a romantic and hopeless passion by dressing it in the terms of the superlative—a religious sacrifice: but such imperfect and inverted knowledge is far from the empty sensationalism of those contemporary agnostics who went to church to enjoy the pageantry.

Cathleen's act of choice isolates her character in a single deed: but apart from this one act, there is very little movement to support the play, which remains rather a dramatic poem than a fully-developed drama. The character of Aleel is allowed little scope; he cannot be said to renounce what he has never had the chance of attaining. The decorative beauty of the description overweights the writing, which moves with a slow and heavy rhythm; all the characters speak in the same highly-wrought style, which demands almost declamatory chanting.

In *The Hour Glass* Yeats re-set the legend of Faustus in the Irish countryside. The Wise Man, who has converted the countrymen to materialist scepticism, finds himself with one hour to live, and no chance of salvation unless he can find one soul who still believes in God. The Fool, an innocent whose second sight seems to have no connection with sanctity or morals, is shown that the soul of the Wise Man is ultimately saved because he ends with unconditional surrender to the will of God.:

> " Although His Will be my eternal pain."

In this play the blindness of the Wise Man and the wisdom of the Fool represent an inner conflict, and the poet plays both rôles. The quest of an unknown faith and the direct experience of an inexplicable

[1] " The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life or of the work;
And if it take the latter, must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark."—*Among School Children.*

other world were the twin poles of Yeats's spiritual life. Here, as in so many other of his plays, the wisdom which is not of the mind, but " comes of beggary " is set against the barren intellect with its negations; yet so limited an inner world as this can be attested only by heroic self-affirmation, a madly individualist gesture, and so must be shadowed as fool and beggar man.

In those plays which Yeats wrote at the end of his life—*Calvary* and *Resurrection*—the Christian story is used, but the centre of the plays is still within the poet's mind. In *Resurrection* the debate between the Hebrew and the Greek in the early hours of Easter Day is an interior debate between the strong instinctive moral impulse of the Hebrew (whose reaction to the death of Christ is Arian) and the sceptical intellect (whose reaction is Gnostic). The two are finally confronted by a Figure Who passes across the room and Whom they take for a phantom only to find, when It is touched, that " the heart of a phantom is beating ". In this silent Figure with the gilded mask Yeats has drawn upon the dramatist's supreme resource—the power of the *unspoken* word, issuing from the total structure of the play. This is the device which Shakespeare reserves for his great climaxes, as when the converted Coriolanus stands with his mother and " holds her by the hand silent ", or the resurrected Hermione hangs upon her husband's neck, but speaks no word while he too, discovering that what he had taken for fantasy is flesh and blood, says only:

" O, shee's warme . . ."

The central fact of Christianity is unlikely to be treated by the good pagan in a manner which would commend itself to believers. Yet in this play Yeats has achieved that difficult feat, and the pitiably foolish experience of some medium which he cites as its originating point bears no relation to the finished work. The Byzantine stiffness of the dialogue, the abrupt shock of the end and the concentration of this little one-act piece are the signs of Yeats's absorption in the paradox of resurrection. The one-act play is characteristic of him, for he never developed the interest in external action which would sustain a longer piece: each of his plays presents only a climax and therefore, to raise his action quickly to heroic pitch, he depended on public " circus animals ", the pre-enlarged figures of heroic legend. Cuchulain, Deirdre, the ghost of Swift who speaks through the lips of a slatternly medium are the masks and images which replace the private " circus animals ", the Phœnix, Tom the Lunatic, and Crazy Jane of the lyrics. Although, like these others, they are openly controlled by the Ringmaster's word, they are figures whose significance is not peculiar to Yeats, but part of the world of letters, the common heritage of the artist.

In those plays where he states more directly the problems of his own inner life, Yeats turned to the Christian stories and characters and perhaps in this he was wiser than he would have acknowledged. The good pagan runs no risk of handling such stories too lightly or easily. Precisely because they are so difficult for him to use, they are, when employed by a writer as powerful and scrupulous as Yeats, the only

adequate vehicle of his deepest experiences. The language of these later plays, severe, stripped and resonant, is bound with a hard but flexible rhythm which is closely based on speech. There is no suggestion of decorative diffusiveness; every word rings true metal. Although Yeats never developed any extended dramatic power, his later plays are true plays and not dramatic poems—they demand presentation upon the stage, words being knit to action and movement so closely that without action their power is immeasurably limited.

Mr. C. S. Lewis once observed that the legends of classical antiquity have for the modern writer a peculiar stability and lucidity, precisely because they are no longer subjects of belief: " you cannot make poetry *of that sort* out of the Christian heaven and hell." In the drama of Yeats can be seen the converse of this becalming ease, the disturbance and deepening of a writer's power when he breaks through the surface disbelief to reach his own deeper levels. This disinfecting quality of surface disbelief may even be an advantage to the writer, however distressing to the man.

Mr. Ward's article is the first of a series by several contributors dealing with different aspects of this subject.

PLAYS IN CHURCHES (1)

—REMARKS ON PRODUCTION

By R. H. Ward

Probably the commonest errors in connection with the presentation of plays in churches (as opposed to theatres and halls) are two: the belief that stage-plays can be adequately performed in church, or easily " adapted " for such performance; and the belief that plays performed in church require the same kind of production as those performed in theatres.

The conventional stage-play, written for presentation in a naturalistic setting and with the usual stage-lighting, will almost certainly fail in a church; indeed, this seems so obvious that it is a wonder so many people persist in the attempt to make it succeed. Only very rarely can a play of this kind be adapted so that it becomes suitable for the peculiar playing-conditions enforced by a church building. Equally rarely is it possible to construct in a church the kind of stage such a play needs. For the most part, both attempts court disaster. A church is a special kind of building and needs a special kind of play; while a conventionally made " fourth-wall ", " picture-frame " play is a special kind of play and needs a special kind of theatre. The attempt to force such a play into the framework of a church generally ruins the play; and the attempt to build " scenery " in a church generally ruins the church.

It is therefore important to be sure, if you think of producing a play for performance in church, that you have chosen one which is structurally suitable, and preferably one which is structurally suitable because the dramatist who wrote it envisaged it as being played in a church; in which case the church will have been part of his mind as he wrote, just as the story, the characters, the ideas and the words themselves were part of his mind. If there are not a great many plays specifically written to be done in churches, at least there are many very fine ones, having the kind of content and action which do not depend upon naturalistic treatment, which may properly be regarded as church-plays. These can be made impressive and thrilling by good speech and costume and intelligent production, because their strength is in their interplay of character, their exposition of exciting ideas, their imaginative and poetic qualities.

The successful adaptation into a church-play of a play specifically intended for the naturalistic stage is a risky business needing a great deal of skill—even if you are prepared to risk the wrath of the dramatist if he is alive, or the dreadful unrest which will be visiting him in his grave if he is not. Nor is the successful (not to say aesthetically satisfying) transformation of a church into something resembling a theatre usually possible—though it can sometimes be achieved in certain kinds of churches and at very considerable cost.

Most people have to be content with their church as it stands; and, with the one proviso that they choose the right kind of play to put in it, they could have no better or more fruitful and suggestive place to act in. A church presents wonderful opportunities to the producer if once he will escape his slavery to Messrs. So-and-So's " acting editions " and free his mind of the ideas, and the desire for the effects, which belong specifically to the theatre.

The great thing is to *use* the church, to think in terms of its whole shape and nature and to imagine the finished production in those terms ; and these include a church's theological meaning, the relation of its different parts one to another, and their different emotional and religious associations, all of which help as occasion demands to make a church in the truest sense a *dramatic* building. Indeed, once the play is properly chosen, a church can be far more dramatic than a theatre, because it is more various and evocative and more able to appeal to our deepest understanding. A church setting gives a religious play an invaluable start.

A centre for the play's action is necessary, and a focus for the eyes and ears of the congregation. In most churches this will be the chancel-steps, or perhaps the place below the screen; in some cases, for certain plays or scenes, it may be the steps of the sanctuary; but a good general principle is to keep the play *among* the congregation, so that what happens in it will appear to be happening to them, not to " characters " at a remote distance. Outside this focal point, however, you have the whole building to play with according as the story demands. It is important that the congregation should at all times be able to see and to hear (for which reason it is sometimes necessary to erect, but discreetly and unobtrusively, a platform or rostrum), but even this

generation is not so stiff-necked that it cannot turn its head, or so deaf that it won't hear if it is given something worth listening to. It rests an audience to shift its attention at times from the focal point—to use the south door for an entrance, the aisles for processions, the rood-loft for an angel's appearance.

While nearly all churches are built on a common general plan, within that plan nearly all differ. But this, if the producer will use his ingenuity, only serves to make every church production the more individual, original, and memorable. An audience which is never sure what is going to happen next, or where it is going to happen, is at least likely to remain awake—even if it is in the habit of sleeping in church. On the stage you can deliver an " exit-line " tellingly and then make it tell still more by a quick exit; very often in church your " off-stage " is ten yards away up the chancel or behind the organ, so that an effective exit has to be entirely differently planned. The mistake lies in trying to make it as much as possible as it would be on a stage. Provided the play is a church-play and the production a church-production, there is nearly always to be found a church-exit (or a church-entrance). It is the same with the " engineering " of all the rest of a play's action, and of its grouping (churches give you magnificent opportunities for this), and of its movements and voice-effects generally. Of course it need hardly be said that a church-play must at least to a great extent be rehearsed in church.

Many churches are none too easy to speak in. They echo. They may even be, in one respect, like the Albert Hall, and suffer from " blind-spots ". These things have to be dealt with, the blind-spots discovered and avoided, the echoes defeated, not by shouting (one's first inclination), but by finding the proper pitch of the building and speaking clearly. A " difficult " church is excellent training for anyone who will take the trouble to master his lips and tongue and open his mouth; the nastiest echo will submit to a good hard consonant.

Where lighting is concerned, too, a clever electrician who will also clear his mind of conventional ideas on stage-lighting can do wonders. It hardly needs saying that churches offer special opportunities for the use of music in a play, or that good colours, properly used in the costumes, need no better surroundings than the old stone and old wood which are part of the intrinsic beauty of the majority of this country's ecclesiastical buildings.

But I believe the real art of producing plays in churches, and the real thrill of it, lies in simply using what you are given and using it effectively and ingeniously: one of the most satisfying arts is the art of improvisation. The shape of the building, the different parts of the building, the normal lighting of the building, and above all the *atmosphere* of the building—all these can be pressed into service. Often the introduction of incongruous, if not unsteady, platforms, bits of scenery, elaborate lighting-plants, odd hangings, and furniture which strikes a discordant note, is a confession of weakness. Fingers were made before forks, and churches before theatres. However it may be with fingers, it may be doubted whether churches have ever been superceded as places in which to act religious plays.

YOU CHOOSE, MISS

Our village, five hundred souls (church, chapel and nothing-at-all) has neither electricity nor a parish hall.

This sentence might be the opening couplet of a modern religious verse-play: but it is intended as a sober prose statement to enable the urban reader to envisage our problem. The village struggles, and the chapel (please Heaven the worst example in England of its architectural type) stands in the middle, one end abutting on to the " William-and-Mary ", the other fronting the grocer's petrol pump. There is nothing that could charitably be written about its interior except that it is very clean. The fifteenth-century church, in the village's own words " lays away by 'erself, silly o'd thing ". She " lays " half a mile beyond the farthest cottage, very beautifully sited among beech and hornbeam and willow, on the Roman Camp. Mothers don't like their daughters to go there alone. Inside, the organ sticks out into the chancel on the left, balanced by an immense coke-furnace on the right, and the pews are Victorian pitchpine, immovable. There are no side aisles. We are almost all agricultural workers, living sixteen miles from a University town.

A few of the recently confirmed girls want to do a play. They ask the Vicar (whom we share with our deadly rivals, the village-next-door) and he asks us. We are the only house right in the village with a room big enough to rehearse in. It is also known that we go to the theatre. And we are " church ".

So we gather the six little girls together. Have they brothers or boy friends? " No, the boys say they won't do a play, won't learn it up, Miss." What about the Chapel people? " They wouldn't come, Miss. Miss, we wouldn't want them: but Mr. Evans, the one that reads out the lessons, he might come." Ever done a play before? " We did Drama at school, Miss, but we didn't act it, only read round, like." I see. Which of you can sing? (Six voices.) " Oi can, Miss." So they sing " Golden slumbers," a little bit sharp from enthusiasm. What sort of a play d'you want to do? Funny, or serious? " Miss, could we do *Gorn with the Wind*? Elsie 's got a green dress. We could do it for the outing, Miss."

But there 's no need to continue in this vein. Countrymen know the set-up already; to town-dwellers it must be almost incommunicable.

What does one do? Wondering, this wonderer turned to the R.D.S. plays lying on the desk upstairs.

Sensation on Budleigh Beacon [1] came first. It is fun. It is written in rollicking light-hearted doggerel that just now and then flashes a poetic glint through the chaff. Its theme, that " In the Lord of Life we see Interpreter of Destiny " and that this interpretation is valid everywhere is put over in good round terms. If one doubts whether the inenarrable high mysteries can be so " sensibly " handled, one cannot doubt that here is language which has meaning for the ordinary boffin, and a

[1] *Plays of Perplexity*, Hougham. S.P.C.K. for R.D.S. Price 3/9.

genuine dramatic situation where the audience will want to know "how does it end?" The author goes on, in the second play, *Dead End*, to write, in prose better than his doggerel, a piece of the *Outward Bound, Halfway House* type, where a casual assembly of people in a queer hotel get a glimpse of the Real through the mists of the apparent, and make the responses their natures dictate. We'd enjoy this play, in our village, if it were done for us, but both this and *Budleigh Beacon* need well-played men's parts, and they're both a wide strip beyond our powers of performance and staging at present. No: neither of these will do for us.

What about *Six Short Religious Plays*?[1] Chapel has some young men attending. If one of these plays proved definitely non-denominational, could we promote a Unity Drama Society?

We begin with *The Rock*. Peter, in conversation with the other disciples and with the Mother of God, is led to a definition of Hell which we would all endorse; the play has a real emotional appeal and even beginners understand something of Peter's nature. But who could play Peter? No, not for us.

The House in Capernaum? No: on literary grounds. Anyone capable of learning this could learn more worthwhile stuff. It wouldn't do badly for a reading-circle, for it has some quite interesting things to say about the Kingdom, and about the characters of the first disciples. But the drama isn't tense enough and the language itself too limp to make suitable acting material for amateurs who must have quality in the script to support and supplement the weakness of their interpretation.

Vera I. Arlett's *Mother of All Living*, which is set in the Garden of Eden, is of course designed for trained speakers; it has some lines and some moments of beauty and an artistic wholeness of construction that made one reader long for a well-balanced team of trained students ("linkéd sweetness long-drawn-out") who could curvet down this course showing their paces, and enjoying every moment of it, as they would. But alas, not for our village!

Alas? Yes, for the play is religious in its approach, and it is beautiful. And yet; and yet; *is* this remote and beautiful material what an R.D.S. and S.P.C.K. publication should be presenting in England now? It is indeed so long, so very long ago, that church, chapel, and nothing-at-all were all dis-paradised. The question, "Where do we go from here?" (and it was of course the question with which Milton's Eve left Eden) rings with such desperate urgency in the ears of some of us that the music of these lines sounds like a spinet played out of doors during a bombardment.

Elizabeth Heward, writing with more nervous precision and force than most of the playwrights we are considering, and with far more sense of stage requirements, comes next, with two plays, *The Abbot and the Woman*, and the *Hermit of Treves*. The former is a simple, easy-to-produce affair on the familiar theme of the tired Woman seeking

[1] *Six Short Religious Plays*. S.P.C.K. for R.D.S. Price 3/6.

shelter for Herself and Her Child : it is quite attractive so long as you don't mind miraculous livestock, but it is rather precious in its simplicity: feeling sure that the author could do solider work, this reader went on to read the *Hermit of Treves*. And here is a really actable piece of theatre. It does indeed demand almost choreographic treatment—and wouldn't Robert Helpmann look superb as the Hermit with the iron crown of thorns ?

Any group that includes dancers should consider this legend of a saint who comes down from his pillar and saves his town by ruining it as a tourist centre. The idea is exactly that of *Budleigh Beacon*, and the rector and the saint have many similarities. One wonders Wordsworthianly: " *Whither is fled the wholly-other gleam. Where is it now, the Barthianic theme* ? " Are we in for another bout of justification by works ? It is of course much easier, especially if one is tired, to make dramatic capital out of the second commandment than out of the first. But in any case, the Hermit is good sure-fire theatre, and (to return to the village), we should revel in it, and so would the village-next-door, because we know the types who appear in it, because there are a number of parts, none of them too long to learn; because something is happening all the time, and because it has children hopping about in it. If we can cajole Mrs. Horne from the " William-and-Mary " to play the Fruit-seller, and suborn a young man from the University to impersonate Robert Helpmann as the Hermit, and if the Morris headlights can be rigged up in the schoolroom, I think we'll have a shot at it. Wotsay ?

Last of the batch, *The Channel is Calm*. It 's a great pity J. J. Mortimer is represented only by this play, which is inevitably dated. The brave French Resistance types, and the crashed British pilot—we can hardly help knowing this plot. However, it 's good stuff for unsophisticated boys' and girls' club actors and would go down well with that type of audience. It would make an excellent practice-play for an older acting group, too, and one hopes that the author, who has a very definite dramatic gift, will see this and other plays of his produced, when certain stilted phrases and awkward constructions could easily be pruned away or straightened out.

What have we then ?

One play out of eight, which might, with a bit of help, be useful to our village.

But also one play, *The Rock*, for an adult acting group; one (V. I. Arlett's) for students of verse-speaking; one (F. Buchanan's) for a reading-circle; *The Abbot* and *The Channel is Calm* for a club double-bill, and the two Plays of Perplexity for larger industrial or rural communities than ours.

May we draw the attention of playwrights to three points ? First, much of the best English writing, from Shakespeare downward, has been done for a known company: try to collect or attach yourselves to one. Second, we need full-length plays, for West End or professional Repertory production. And, lastly, we need plays for to-morrow, not for yesterday.

JOINING IN

Here is a letter of the sort that builds a society like ours ; it comes from Chester-le-Street, Durham.

Chester-le-Street.

" The current copy of *Christian Drama* has just reached me, and it prompts me to write on several matters.

Your thought-provoking leading article hits hard, and states the Society's case excellently. May it bring forth much fruit. It does, however, hit a little indiscriminately. Perhaps, because of compression, it is bound to do so. I am sure that R.D.S. has some knowledge of the lonely uphill and all but heartbreaking struggle that some of the ardent, but isolated producers of religious drama have to face year by year . . . the producer of religious drama is often up against the pull of the ordinary amateur dramatic societies: and just because the ordinary society produces lighter or more " thrilling " stuff, and usually to larger houses, the talented members of a small town will always tend to drift into the secular society. Again, about fitting ourselves as producers: a very great number of producers do a great deal in this direction. The attendances at Summer Schools is a clear indication of this. It is no light matter to give up a week's holiday, and in addition pay six or seven pounds plus fares (often a very large sum) in the interest of drama. The fact that people will do this kind of thing at all is witness to a real enthusiasm. Speaking for myself, I have studied in my very limited spare time for upwards of three years in order to take the L.G.S.M. (speech and drama) diploma, of which I hope to sit the last exams this Easter. It seems to me that in days to come if and when the work of R.D.S. is more fully recognized and appreciated, the Society might do something about encouraging producers to qualify in some way for the work they are doing. A parallel case is to be found in the National Association of Boys' Clubs, which Society is doing everything in its power to persuade, even the part-time voluntary Club Leaders, to take a non-academic qualification through the Association to give them status in their work; or better still to become fully qualified Club Leaders. In short, we, like you, labour under many difficulties—we even share your anxieties about lack of funds (what couldn't we do but for that)—and even if we do sometimes expect impossibilities of you, you, with your more understanding outlook should not expect impossibilities of us.

Enough of that."

But it wasn't enough. Chester-le-Street sent us £13 odd, net proceeds of subsequent performances of " Go Down, Moses ".

" In a recent programme of three one-act plays, we performed : *Bread*, by L. Davison, a modern morality; *The Fortieth Man*, by F.

Collins; *The Eyes of God*, by F. Collins. This gave us plenty of contrast in setting, costume and treatment, and in addition to being good entertainment and good teaching, it was grand experience for both producer and players.

We are now doing *Go Down, Moses* instead of a Passion Play.

Greetings and all good wishes from the lonely North-East."

Dear readers, do you see that this letter has everything? Critical interest, capacity to hit hard where we deserve it, constructive suggestions, continuous practical effort, and a willingness to pay for the mutual help it demands?

And isn't this heartening, from a correspondent in Denmark?—

April 16th, 1948

DEAR SIR,

A week ago I had the pleasure to receive *Christian Drama* together with your letter to Mr. Bjorn Hallström asking if I could be interested in becoming affiliated to your Society as a kind of member. To this I can answer that I am very much interested in this, as I have worked for some years with " Churchplay " as I call it, at my church, Church of the Holy Ghost, one of the oldest and biggest churches just in the centre of Copenhagen.

I do not know under what conditions I can enter as a member and receive the magazine, but I hope you will give me some information, and at the same time I should like to be informed about some literature concerning modern Christian drama, especially in churches, as well as titles of some plays. I have as the only Protestant and Lutheran pastor in Denmark worked with such plays for some years, much after the principles set forth in the Article, " Hyaena and Bone," by Nevill Coghill.

I have myself written the plays and as they are printed I would willingly send you copies although they only are in the Danish language.

For some years I have worked together with a known pastor, Erik Arbin, in Stockholm, Sweden, who also uses the drama in his church.

I am looking forward to a closer connection with your work, as I am convinced that it would be a great inspiration for us.

This next week we are performing my play, *The Eternal Life*, four evenings. We had the same last November six times, and always a full church. It was also in the radio and had a fine press, but I need to learn by others.

With my best greetings,

Yours,

H. HELWEG.

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURNS

This account of doings at Exeter seems to us of first importance.

Religious Drama in the Cathedral.

To the mingled loveliness of stone arches, sunlight and music which tell forth the glory of God continually, whether man sees or hears, or not, the Cathedral is now adding another voice which must speak directly to the soul, through eye, ear and mind, the voice of the Drama. Centuries have passed since these ancient arches have looked down on the ritual presentation of the *Quem Queritis* played by the priests in the dim light, bearing candles, but the arches preserve ancient memories and the Cathedral does not forget.

In these days of consternation and trouble, we have once more brought a presentation of the Faith, yes, and of the unfaith of to-day in dramatic form to our Mother Church. The past year has seen three such plays: two, which represent the ancient faith in its traditional form, *Christ Crucified*, and the Coming of the Kings from the *Coventry Miracle*, and another which challenged tradition and the complacency of accepted religion, *The Just Vengeance*.

All had the initial difficulty to contend with, that of making the actors audible; Grandison was no playgoer, and did not build his arches for the convenience of actors—people of whom he had a very poor opinion. None completely succeeded, though the value of the trained voice made itself most apparent. The first play, by Margaret Cropper, was a kind of meditation on the Passion, and the thought of the play is carried by the Angel Chorus. Their untiring work, through months in which the Cathedral was below freezing point, had its reward, for they completely gripped their audience down to the far West end. The players on the realistic stage, however, were less successful in getting their lines past the danger spots, but the audience knew the story, their movements and gestures were sufficiently significant to convey what was not always heard, and their sincerity kept the atmosphere of the scenes. This was a deeply devotional play, and the use of the Old Testament Prophecy, and the narrative of the Passion, which was the message of the Angels, was beautifully written.

The second play, *The Just Vengeance*, by Dorothy Sayers, presented by a young company and producer, departed entirely from traditional methods, and, as I learn from discussions, had a very strong appeal to the younger, more modern minds in the audience. Dorothy Sayers is not a perfect dramatist, but she has power, and at times a strong simplicity.

The production had strength and purpose, and we shall hope to see this young producer in the Cathedral again.

The last production, written in ancient days for performance in a church, did not need to fear the Cathedral. True, the lines spoken at the bottom were not always heard at the top, but the whole audience

could watch the slow and stately approach of the Kings up nave and aisles, could see their worship of the Child, and finally could see the whole magnificence of colour which was still before them as they made their offerings. Audience, priests, musicians and all players were together in this kind of performance; the people went on their way, the Kings bade farewell to the Child and His Mother, and all faded out into the darkness once more.

MARY KELLY.

Our second star turn comes from **Reigate** *and we print here an account of the performance of T. B. Morris's play "I Will Arise", by an R.D.S. member of the audience.*

The spectacular success of the Coventry Cathedral play performed in Reigate Congregational Church in mid-March showed how effectively any ordinary church could use religious drama to proclaim redeeming truth.

More than 700 saw the one-act play, *I Will Arise*, by T. B. Morris, on the three nights it was staged. On the Sunday evening, when it took the place of the regular service, fully 350 people filled the church. The average evening congregation is less than half that number. And more striking than the numbers who saw it was the play's clear effect on its audiences.

To the players rehearsing, the play itself, first performed by an anonymous cast in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral, looked for a time unpromising and over-ambitious for performers few of whom had any experience. Cast, scenery, stage effects, lighting, costumes, were equally improvised, and all came out of the ordinary material accessible to any church group.

In the creative hands of Clive Sansom the producer, people and things took shape and meaning gradually, over a few weeks of thorough training and preparation. By the first performance they had attained cohesion and unity. They made the audience see, not familiar people in costumes fashioned largely from dyed old sheets, posing on an improvised stage below the pulpit, but mediaeval pilgrims and modern bomb-hopeless citizens.

Against this convincing human background they saw the eternal battle between faith and doubt, between intangible good and concrete shattering evil, symbolized in the struggle between the two main characters of the Devil himself and the angel Michael. They watched them fighting there, visibly, in the ruins of Coventry, and related the battle to the inner struggle they had often felt in their own minds and spirits. And they went away more conscious of this ageless battle still continuing, themselves involved, more than a little inspired and stronger for their part in it.

By the final performance on the Sunday evening the play, improved with playing, had attained obvious spiritual power. You could see the effect in the hushed congregation and the thoughtful elation of its quiet departure.

All the twenty anonymous players were regular members of the congregation, and formed a fair cross-section of it. Lucifer and Michael, somewhat more experienced than most of the others, gave a strong lead. The church choir, with Mr. A. W. White as organist and choirmaster, helped much to create the atmosphere and heighten the effect of the play, but they were out of sight. Simple scenery and lighting rendered visible only the open stage, and used the darkness around as imagined bombed walls and broken windows.

It was ten years since this church had had a religious play. So long a time is not likely to pass without another.

Sheffield.

We make no apology for once more including news of this vital centre of religious drama among our Star Turns. Pamela Keily sends this unadorned report of recent activities:—

Easter productions in Sheffield have been headed by the Christian Community Players' tour of R. H. Ward's *Figure on the Cross*. The circumstances have necessitated a double cast and double rehearsals, in order to be able to book dates as demanded. The play is continuing to tour the city till mid-April.

The King of Sorrows was rehearsed as a reading in preparation for Easter by a joint Methodist and Anglican cast—and performed in churches of both denominations.

A parish group also worked on this particular play from *The Man Born to be King*, finding in its realism a totally other conception of the Passion of our Lord from any grasped in previous less violent productions.

There was also a new mime by Gladys Wiles, produced at St. Cecilia's, Parson Cross, on Good Friday.

The immediate time-table includes an effort to do *Go Down, Moses* with some of the younger employees of a steel works. This involves rehearsing extremely raw material *in* the works—where those taking part are being given an afternoon a week off work to do this.

Rehearsals are also in progress with members of Sheffield Youth Clubs for a production of *Murder in the Cathedral*.

And the following criticism of the main production comes from an independent R.D.S. observer:—

Played in a number of different churches and halls in the diocese, the most recent production of the Association of Christian Communities in Sheffield—the first of R. H. Ward's *The Figure on the Cross* since it was done at Worcester Cathedral some time ago—reaches a degree of artistic excellence which few amateur productions attain. It is beautifully audible, even in the more difficult choral passages; its movement and grouping are always significant; it has all the necessary variation of pace; and, unlike so many productions of religious plays, it is at all times fully dramatic; that is, it tells the play's story in terms which we can recognize as belonging to our own experience and understanding

of life. Where the play is weakest, the production and playing save it; where it is strongest, the fullest advantage is taken of the material supplied by the dramatist.

But these things are largely the result of hard work, the natural abilities of the actors, and the technique and vision of the producer. There is a further quality inherent in this production, one which is rare and hard to define, whence it derives its inward glow of life and reality. Under the influence of this quality religion and art become inseparable. Essentially, it is a question of attitude; it arises from the working together of a team of disinterested persons whose work is greater than themselves—indeed, when occasionally it breaks down, this is because an individual actor is attempting to act for himself, and not for his group. Just as the destructive power of an undisciplined and uncontrolled mob can be higher than that of any one of its individual components, so the creative power of a disciplined and controlled team can also be higher than that of any one of its individual components.

The producer of this remarkable performance is Miss Pamela Keily. The proportions of her group's debt to her, of hers to her group, it would be impossible to assess. Neither without the other could have given Sheffield the rarity it is seeing during these few weeks: religious drama worthy of the name.

ALL THE REST

Bristol. The Guild of Cathedral Players has just completed six months of arduous but happy work in the preparation and presentation of two plays in the Nave of Bristol Cathedral, one at Christmas and the other during Easter Week.

The play chosen for their Christmas share in the Cathedral services was Dorothy Sayers' *He That Should Come*; the following is the comment of the local Press:—

"This play was played with deep sincerity, a close regard to the conventions of stage technique, and at a tempo which was delightfully brisk and even. The mosaic of colour formed by the costumes of the Biblical characters, the sturdy interpretation of Miss Sayers' colloquial dialogue, and the completely realistic treatment of the crowded Inn scene, made this presentation of the Nativity story one to be remembered. May we suggest that the Guild of Cathedral Players, . . . have indeed rendered Religious Drama in Bristol a signal service."

The play chosen by the Dean for Easter presentation was John Drinkwater's *A Man's House*. The Guild had already played this beautiful Passion play two years ago, but the Dean felt that it was well worth repeating, and the players chosen were mainly older and more mature in outlook than those in the earlier production. The local Press commented:—

"Regarded as a form of religious drama it succeeded admirably in painting devotion in vivid colouring, which heightened its effect without compromising its message. Regarded as drama it was equally brilliant."

The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral have sanctioned a special Evensong early in June to which the Guild of Cathedral Players will invite members of other Bristol Amateur Dramatic Guilds to share in their praise and prayers for their work during the coming year.

Machen, Mon. The St. Michael's Religious Drama Group gave performances of Dorothy Sayers' *Kings in Judaea* in their parish church at Machen in January. The

Group, recruited almost entirely from the young people of the village, is in its infancy, but is showing signs of developing into a useful maturity.

The players have the advantage of performing in a fourteenth-century church, which seems to have been built for the enactment of religious drama as well as for the requirements of the Church's worship. The stone floor of the chancel is two feet above the level of the nave, whilst the chancel arch drops low enough to form a natural proscenium. In such a setting there are not many problems of stage construction.

In spite of a few frights caused by untimely indispositions the play was a success. Unexpected talent was revealed and another addition made to the company's small stock of experience. General criticisms are that movement is still either too stiff or too slovenly with many, that hands remain encumbrances for a few and that it will be some time before most of the players will " get inside the skin " of a character.

F. T. Secombe.

Cambridge. The Religion Through Drama group's performance, *The Life of the Prophet Jeremiah*, is a magnificent theme around which to build a religious play, but it requires extremely careful handling to avoid bathos, and " Religion Through Drama " is hardly the best vehicle for such a subject.

In a normal R.T.D. production, the actors are allotted their parts and given a rough outline of the play at their first rehearsal, and the whole play is built up at the subsequent rehearsals by the players themselves. This may seem haphazard, but in practice the play usually assumes a fairly set form (although it is quite possible for the whole plot to change during an actual performance). The main value of such a production is to the players themselves, for R.T.D. is primarily intended as a religious educational system for use in schools and youth clubs.

With a subject like Jeremiah, however, this kind of approach might have produced some rather unbiblical twists in the plot, and it was considered advisable to alter the rules slightly by drawing up a précis of the play giving the main entrances and exits and the gist of each speech or situation.

An obvious danger of this sort of presentation is that the extempore dialogue will emerge as a mixture of A.V. and modern slang, so it was decided to stick to modern speech entirely, except for the Voice of God. A far greater danger, however, was that what was intended as a serious scene would become farcical owing to bad movement and timing, and to avoid this some of the more delicate scenes were carefully rehearsed with a set script, as for a normal play, and it is interesting to note that these were the particular scenes which evoked especially favourable comment.

The performances were enjoyed by both the actors and the audiences, but although this method of play production may have a certain amount of educational value to those participating, it can be discounted as a serious form of Religious Drama.

Correspondent, R. Ashton.

Puttenham. *Night on the Hill*, a sacred play by T. B. Morris, was successfully performed in Puttenham Church, near Guildford, last week. The action of the play takes place on the evening of the Crucifixion and tells, in the space of an hour, the story of a wealthy but crippled woman who finds at the foot of the Cross consolation and a new hope through her meeting with the characters of the Passion. The actors, who were all parishioners, spoke their lines simply and with great reverence. A most moving final scene was effected when the " Women of Jerusalem ", singing a glad " Alleluia ", processed through the church to the rough wooden Cross on the sanctuary steps. This production should do much to encourage the formation of village religious drama groups in the neighbourhood.

Wendy de la Bere.

Bickley and Widmore. The Bickley and Widmore Guild of Players this year presented the Passion Play *The Shepherd of Souls*.

All three performances were marked by an atmosphere of reverence and sincerity. Crowd scenes were remarkably well grouped, especially in the Judgment Scene. The scene on Mount Calvary was saved from mere emotionalism by the realistic acting of the soldiers with the seamless robe, the railers and the Centurion. The storm was the best of much fine " off stage " work.

The short scene of Our Lady and St. John returned from Calvary was intensely touching; the fresh joyousness of Mary Magdalene struck the true Easter note. The concluding scene linked the historic events of the first Holy Week with the Passion in the modern world and the performance owed much to the Handel and Bach selections beautifully chosen and rendered.

Lambeth. Holy Trinity Church *Bulletin* reports: " *Impious Herod*, a new play with Music, is the biggest job we have attempted. It was presented here on January 10th and 11th and then toured on Fridays till Passiontide. The play is about the massacre of the Innocents, and including dances plays about two hours.

" Our players, comparatively young as they all still are, seem now to have passed from the experimental stage to the happy state of knowing what they are doing and doing it as a matter of routine. They even do their own make-up.

" Not a single player has missed a performance, through illness or any other cause. They are always punctual. Entrances are timed to perfection. Lines are no longer a bugbear, worry is ended.

" What is difficult is to persuade an ordinary parish audience that a play is worth coming to see when the performers are not personally known to them. In this matter, our hosts have to do the work and we are grateful to them for their efforts and the kind reception we have had.

" The Rev. J. G. Williams, our B.B.C. friend, with his usual wit, described this play as our Holy Cabaret. This perhaps was by way of a compliment to our guest artiste, who plays the Spirit of the Star. But all the players are to be congratulated—and the musicians, who do their job so well that we tend to forget them."

Reigate. *The Old Man of the Mountains*, given by St. Mark's Players. Clive Sansom reports:—

" This must be one of the first of the few amateur performances of Norman Nicholson's play to take advantage of the third-act revisions which he has made since publication. It seems that some groups have been deterred by the two-part set, feeling that their stage was too small to accommodate it. If so, this production disproved them. The right-hand cottage interior contained a minimum of furniture; the left-hand exterior was given space and depth by an admirable backcloth of the Cumberland Fells painted by a sixteen year-old student from the local Art School; and the result was that, although the stage was only moderate in size, there was no sense of cramping.

" The poet has given some of his best verse to the Raven, and the girl who took this part brought to it an excellent combination of sense and rhythm. Elijah did not show quite the same appreciation of the verse, and the same criticism might be made of the other players, whose characterizations showed human understanding and often subtlety without always catching the poetry. But the production was least successful in the Chorus of three voices representing the Beck. Here the speaking went to the other extreme, and instead of being prosaic became jingly. It seemed to one listener that the producer had distorted the rhythm to a metrical pattern the poet had never intended.

" As a whole, however, the production was excellent. It had vitality and it had pace; all moves were there for a purpose; and it left the audience with an impression of religious truth which such a performance should produce—and seldom does. One hopes that its success will encourage other groups to attempt this difficult but rewarding drama."

Hampstead Garden Suburb. The same play was given by " The Nightingales " during March in the church of St. Jude-on-the-Hill. An R.D.S. observer reports: " In spite of commendable simplicity in the staging, this play (designed for the intimacy of a small theatre) seemed to lose much of its power in the vault of this large church, particularly as the Elijah—though most thoughtfully and competently acted—remained pocket-size in voice and presence. A noteworthy feature of the intelligent production (which, however, kept to Nicholson's original third act—something of a miss-fire on Mt. Carmel) was the mimed interpretation of the Beck choruses, spoken ' off ' by a single voice. This innovation, caused no doubt by acoustic problems, was justified in the event by the clear definition of the dancers' movements.

Two really accomplished performances by Mrs. Obadiah and the Widow led a hard-working team in a commendable effort. With further training and experience these players should achieve a very high standard, and we look forward to seeing more of their work.

Dovercourt, Essex. Cliff Road Congregational Drama Group set amateur dramatics before the local public again this week with an ambitious three-hour production of two plays at the newly-opened Congregational Church Hall, Dovercourt. The first, *The Foolishness of God*, a one-act curtain raiser, by Freda Collins, was not wholly convincing, but the three-act play, *The Obedient Rebel*, written by the minister of the church, the Rev. F. H. Wiseman, was a talented performance, sincerely done.

The Foolishness of God told the story of a group of women thrown together in danger at a missionary outpost somewhere in China during the civil wars.

Presented for the first time on the stage, the Rev. F. H. Wiseman's play, *The Obedient Rebel* is about Jeremiah, the woeful prophet of the Old Testament. It covers an important period in the history of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah which faced the might of Babylon decayed with corruption. It is a play with immense scope, and Mr. Wiseman has made his characters realistic people that none the less keep their historic identity. His Jeremiah is a gloomy prophet who resents the pessimistic nature of the messages he has to give, but who, submissive to truth, is a faithful if rebellious servant of God. . . .

Haywards Heath. Ardingly College informs us:—

" It might perhaps interest you to know that our Drama Club here is putting on a new Easter Play entitled *The Armour of Light*, on March 27th and 28th. It is in three scenes and plays for slightly over three-quarters of an hour.

We built ourselves a new stage and lighting-set last term and gave a performance of two plays. Our rehearsals for this play have been shaping well.

" The play deals with Palestine in 1948 and Palestine at the time of the Crucifixion, and the central pivot of the play lies in the Resurrection. The chief character is the Centurion whose servant was healed by our Lord."

Correspondent, RICHARD HAMILTON.

First Performance. The first amateur production of Anthony Merryn's play *Death of a Traitor*, by St. Matthew's Drama Group, Buckley, took place in Hawkesbury Hall, Buckley, on 21st and 22nd April, 1948. It was a fine performance of a difficult play. Its theme is the bitter choice of Sir Thomas More between the demands of the state and the claims of conscience, and it called for the closest attention on the part of the audience. It has, however, a present significance, and the vigorous production, the sensitive speaking of the verse, the costuming and the staging, combined to hold the audience throughout, and won for the play an excellent reception.

The drama was firmly founded on the sound acting of the three principal characters —the Protector and the Seeker (personifications of State and Conscience), and Sir Thomas More, for whose submission these two contend. The Protector's worldly

persuasion and ruthless authority, the Seeker's contrasting sensitivity, and More's gaiety and gravity, wit and wisdom, his indulgence of friends, simplicity of vision, his bitter doubt, and final resolution, were all excellently conveyed. Of the lesser characters, the shrewish Lady More, the understanding Meg, the waggish Patterson, call for mention. The large cast included two very effective groups of Beggars and Clergy.

The play was produced by the Rev. W. D. Davies, assisted by Mr. J. C. Jones. The next production of this recently formed Group will be keenly awaited, and will have an exceedingly high standard to maintain.

PEOPLE'S TRUST ASSOCIATION LTD.

This association informs us of its intention to launch an ambitious project entitled " The Quest ", in the form of a series of pageants based on the Quest of King Arthur's Knights for the wisdom of the Holy Grail, and having as its objective Peace on Earth and Good-will towards men. Enquiries should be addressed to T. C. Fairbairn, Director, " The Quest," 5 Endsleigh Place, London, W.C. 1.

We wish " The Quest " every success.

R.D.S. NEWS AND NOTICES

RODNEY BENNETT.

Members—particularly those fortunate enough to have known and learnt from him—will grieve to hear of the recent death of Rodney Bennett. His rare and happy personality, which informed and deepened his remarkable gift for teaching, will be sorely missed by many friends—not least the R.D.S., of which he was a keen supporter and councillor. His wide knowledge of the practical problems of amateur dramatics and his profound understanding of people (especially youngsters) engaged in them gave to his work a unique quality and value, which can be seen clearly in both his technical books and his plays. In the field of specifically religious drama his excellent *The Real St. George* remains a model that would-be dramatists do well to study; and during the last year of his life he completed a new dramatization of *The Pilgrim's Progress*—a version lovingly adapted to the limitations and potentialities of the amateur stage. We are grateful that S.P.C.K. have agreed to publish this play for R.D.S.

Our hearts go out in sympathy to his wife and family.

SUMMER SCHOOLS, 1948.

Chichester. July 23rd to 30th, at Bishop Otter College.

Bookings have been coming in steadily, but as we go to press a number of vacancies remain. There is thus still time for *you* to apply, to urge your group to send a representative, to tell your friends, and so to help us to fill the school to capacity. In particular we ask you to concentrate your efforts upon the male sex; realizing the importance of adequate *man*-power in religious drama we are reserving the greater part of the remaining vacancies for *men students*. It is time, gentlemen, please, to make up your minds not to miss this first-rate opportunity.

The buildings, the grounds, and the country around offer an ideal background for a perfect summer holiday course.

Applicants will be very glad to learn that after the Bishop of Chichester has opened the School, Mr. Martin Browne will give the first address, and he hopes to stay with us over the week-end.

We are sorry to have to announce that Miss Susan Pearson cannot now fulfil her engagement on the staff as she is joining the Wilson Barrett Repertory Company in Edinburgh. She has, however, secured **Miss Elizabeth Joisce** to take her place. Miss Joisce has a wide experience of dramatic work with schools and youth clubs, and we look forward keenly to having her with us.

One of the features of the School will be the presentation of a religious play by a Sussex group. The Sussex Churches Drama Committee is running a Competition in July, with Mr. Martin Browne as the adjudicator, and the winning group will perform its play at our School.

We hope to have many students and visitors from Sussex with us throughout the week.

Music will play a considerable part in the syllabus, under the direction of Mr. Christopher le Fleming.

Application forms and leaflets are still available from the office: R.D.S., S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2.

Edinburgh. We confirm the provisional notice, given in our last issue, of a FESTIVAL SCHOOL OF RELIGIOUS DRAMA for ADVANCED students, *September 4th to 13th*, at The Gateway, Edinburgh.

Fee: Resident, 8 guineas; Non-resident, 4 guineas.

Residence at the Women's Missionary College, St. Colm's, Edinburgh.

This Anglo-Scottish Course, arranged by R.D.S. in collaboration with The Gateway, Edinburgh, is for a limited number of students who will be accepted on the basis of experience.

Mr. Martin Browne will direct the School, assisted by a staff of experts drawn from those taking part in the Festival.

Here is a wonderful opportunity of attending the International Festival, and combining it with advanced instruction in religious drama. There will be lectures, rehearsals, and study classes during each morning and some afternoons only. Evenings will usually be free. Bookings, included in the fee, have been made for the following three Festival Plays:—

The Three Estates. A Sixteenth-century Morality.

Les Fausses Confidences. From Le Theatre Marigny, Paris.

The Firstborn. The Pilgrim Players. A new play about Moses by Christopher Fry.

The International Festival Programme will be sent to prospective students in order that they may book seats for other performances.

We are not advertising this School in any large-scale way, but rather relying on our members and their friends to fill the limited accommodation. We hope for twenty students from Scotland, and twenty from England and Wales, a large proportion of whom we hope will be men. We shall, therefore, be glad of your co-operation.

Application Forms and further details are available from the organizer, Miss Carina Robins, at the R.D.S. Office.

FROM THE TRAVELLING ADVISER.

Liverpool. The Bishop of Liverpool's Advisory Committee on Religious Drama held its second Week-end School of Religious Drama from April 23rd to 25th at Chester Retreat House.

With the exception of one session, I was the sole lecturer, but thanks to most efficient organization on the part of the secretary, Mr. Herbert Atfield, we had a happy and useful week-end with approximately twenty-five students, nearly half of whom were men—a great achievement.

Poole and Parkstone Religious Drama Centre. This very keen body held its second non-residential Week-end School from April 30th to May 2nd.

We are grateful to Miss Joyce Evans, coming at short notice to share the work with me in the place of Mr. Rodney Bennett, for her fine contribution to what proved to be a very worth-while week-end's training.

LIBRARY.

The following have been added to the Library since February:—

Plays

**All Things New.* A play in three acts and an epilogue. SHIRLEY ST. CLAIR, G.F.S. 3/6. 4 m., 10 w. Different sets of people lacking a definite faith meet at a seaside hotel. The performance of a play on the Life of our Lord (in modern dress) brings them to a knowledge of the saving power of Christ.

**Four Sacred Plays.* DOROTHY L. SAYERS: *The Devil to Pay*; *The Just Vengeance*; *He That Should Come*; *The Zeal of Thy House.* Gollancz, 1948. 9/-.

**Kindled at Thy Flame.* C.M.S., 1799–1949. A Pageant by JESSIE POWELL. Church Missionary Society. 2/. Large cast, 3 hours. A pageant on traditional lines, but with considerable originality in presentation. Written in rhythmical prose. It gathers together the different mission-fields and their needs, relating them to the Home Church.

A Long Look Back and Other Plays. VERA I. ARLETT, Independent Press Ltd. 3/-.

A Long Look Back. 4 m., 3 w., ¾ hour. A modern fantasy in which a Christian leader is transported back to the time of the Crucifixion with surprising results. Good drama if the argument is not too closely scrutinized.

**Life Goes On.* 4 m., 1 w. A moving tale of Christian martyrdom during the fourth century.

**Wayfaring Folk.* 4 m., 4 w., 1 lion. An allegory set in Egypt during the time of the Flight of Mary and Joseph and the Holy Babe. Original, amusing in parts and dramatic.

**Living Water.* JESSIE POWELL, Edinburgh House Press. 6 m., 7 w. An up-to-date and stimulating drama on the penetration of Christian ideas into a Muslim village.

New Horizon. ERNEST PORTER, Methodist Missionary Society, 1948. 4d. 7 w., 1 c., 1 act, 20 minutes. A symbolic voice drama: Humanity, bound and gagged, is helped by women of different nations.

**Plays of Perplexity.* E. R. HOUGHAM: *Sensation on Budleigh Beacon* (1 act). *Dead End* (3 acts). R.D.S./S.P.C.K. 3/9. Details given in previous issues.

**Saint Alban.* VERA I. ARLETT, Gollancz, 1948. 5/-. 10 m., 3 w., 3 acts, Legionaries, auxiliaries, slaves. Dramatic and imaginative treatment of the martyr. The author, finding many resemblances between A.D. 303 and our own times, presents the Saint as the champion of religious freedom in the fight against state tyranny.

**Seed of Adam and Other Plays.* CHARLES WILLIAMS. With an Introduction by ANNE RIDLER.

Seed of Adam. Christmas Play in verse. 10 characters, chorus.

The Death of Good Fortune. A Christmas play. 8 characters. The scene is an open place in a city.

The House by the Stable. A Christmas allegory in one act. 6 characters.

Grab and Grace or *It's the Second Step.* (Companion and Sequel to *The House by the Stable.*) 6 characters.

A Shepherd Remembers. A Nativity play by E. E. YEOMANS, Cary Press. 9d. 3 scenes, 35 mins. An unusual treatment of the Nativity. More useful for reading or discussion in the Senior Sunday School than for playing.

**Six Short Religious Plays.* R.D.S./S.P.C.K., 1948. 3/6.

1. *Mother of All Living.* VERA I. ARLETT. 4 or 5 m., 1 or 2 w. Verse. Adam and Eve return to the Gate of Paradise. Eve prophecies the coming of a son who will be both God and Man.
2. *A House in Capernaum.* FRANK BUCHANAN. 3 m., 4 w. Episode suggested by St. Mark 1. In verse.
3. *This Rock.* ALAN POOLE. 4 m. 2 w. St. Peter on the evening of the first Good Friday.
4. *The Hermit of Treves.* 4 m., 5 w., 4 c. (doubling possible). Fifth-century story of Basil the Hermit.
5. *The Abbot and the Woman.* 2 m., 1 w., 1 c. Legend of the Abbot of Kenach.
6. *The Channel is Calm.* JOHN MORTIMER. Play of the French Resistance Movement.

**The Summoning of Everyman.* A modern version of the mediaeval morality play by HERBERT W. PAYNE, French, 1947. 1/6. Made for and performed by the Bristol W.E.A. Players (in modern dress). Feeling that the mediaeval idiom was an obstacle to the general appreciation of this play which is for all time, Mr. Payne re-wrote it in present-day speech that is clear and dignified, hoping that it would serve as an introduction to the glories of the original.

They Move On. GREGORY PAGE, from *New Plays Quarterly*, Rylee Ltd. 1/8. 8 m., 3 w., 1 b., 1½ hours. Another Heavenly Gate play, but with Pontius Pilate as door-keeper.

**Thou Bethlehem.* A Nativity play. J. G. MARASH. (To be published.) 13 m., 2 w., 1 angel, 2 b., 1 g. Specially suitable for an audience of children. The small grandson of the Inn-keeper has spiritual insight and real understanding of the Nativity.

The Victory of the Cross. M. CREAGH-HENRY, French, 1948. 1/6. 4 m., 3 w., 3 scenes, 1 set, 1½ hour. The action takes place in the Upper Room and covers the period from the arrest of Jesus to the Resurrection morning.

A set of Holst's music written for *The Coming of Christ*, by JOHN MASEFIELD, has been presented to the Library.

Reference Books and Others

Drama Since 1939. ROBERT SPEAIGHT. Illustrated. Published for the British Council by Longmans Green & Co. 2/-. The author examines developments in the theatre during the war years, and makes a critical study of some modern dramatists and plays. The last chapter is devoted to the revival of Poetic Drama.

Our Culture: Its Christian Roots and Present Crisis. Edward Alleyn Lectures, 1944. Edited by V. A. DEMANT, D.Litt. S.P.C.K. 5/-. The lecture, " Towards a Christian Aesthetic," by DOROTHY SAYERS, is of special interest to R.D.S. members.

Speech and Drama, by ROSE BRUFORD, with a preface by Professor Sir STANLEY MARCHANT. Methuen, 1948. 6/-. This book will be of great help to producers and actors ; there are innumerable original and amusing exercises.

* *Included in recommended list.*

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